United Nations A/C.1/62/PV.7

General Assembly
Sixty-second session

Official Records

First Committee
7th meeting
Tuesday, 16 October 2007, 10 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Badji ..... (Senegal)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda items 87 through 105 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. Mohamad (Sudan): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on a well-deserved assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. Indeed, dear brother and colleague, it is a privilege to see a seasoned diplomat of your calibre presiding over the work of this important Committee. We assure you and your Bureau of our full support and cooperation.

Once again, this Committee is considering issues of disarmament and current scenarios of international peace and security. It is doing so against the backdrop of successive failures, setbacks and even the erosion of previous international commitments and agreements. That is indeed not good news for the international community, which has resolved since the inception of the United Nations to make disarmament its priority. Developments since the last session of this Committee indicate that technological advances are being used to enhance the sophistication of arms build-up rather than for disarmament.

The Sudan once again reaffirms that multilateralism premised on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations is the only way to address the complexity of the disarmament and international peace and security agendas. Unilateralism works only in the opposite direction, as it certainly makes our globe more unsafe. It is incumbent upon all of us to constructively engage in the promotion of multilateralism as a core principle and direction for international collective security.

As the United Nations is the suitable and relevant forum for total and complete disarmament, we welcome the restructuring of the Department of Disarmament Affairs into the Office for Disarmament Affairs as part of the Secretary-General's commitment to revitalize international disarmament programmes. We wish to congratulate Ambassador Sergio Duarte for his appointment as High Representative of the Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs and to reiterate our support for the work of the new Office of Disarmament Affairs, following our active participation in all the deliberations leading to its establishment.

The commitment expressed by the Secretary-General to give priority to disarmament and international peace and security agendas is a test and a challenge to put the disarmament machinery back on track. We shall be waiting for results. We shall be waiting for results.

Sudan is a party to all the important treaties and agreements related to disarmament, and it is our firm belief that total and complete disarmament is vital to the maintenance of international peace and security, notwithstanding the serious setbacks in past years. In 2005 and 2006, no substantive consensus document was achieved, especially at the three major multilateral conferences: the seventh Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, the World Summit, and the

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

07-54280 (E)

United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. And while we are gathered here, reiterating our positions, the practical facts outside this building remain totally contrary, given that military expenditures have reached their highest point, having grown to 37 per cent more than what they were ten years ago. That is why serious efforts are needed to reverse this very serious trend.

The cornerstone for non-proliferation is the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, especially in the Middle East. The only path to achieving the latter goal is through Israel's accession to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and full submission of all its nuclear capabilities to the comprehensive safeguard system of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Sudan further calls on all Member States to ratify the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, also known as the Treaty of Pelindaba, so that it can enter into force without further delay. Efforts by Member States towards peaceful uses of nuclear energy should not be hindered or compromised under any pretext. Furthermore, it goes without saying that a key component of the institutional architecture for the maintenance of international peace and security should be the role given to regional organizations and arrangements.

With regard to conventional weapons, since the last session we have been closely following the ongoing discussions on the ways and means to develop an international strategy aimed at controlling the transfer, import and export of conventional arms, including the proposed arms trade treaty. We should continue to engage constructively in this process to figure out its feasibility and how far it will serve the disarmament objectives within the multilateral context, and in full transparency without prejudice to the legitimate rights of Member States.

Sudan remains deeply concerned about the lack of significant progress in the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The illegal transfer of these weapons to armed groups and non-State actors continues to fuel civil wars and conflicts in Africa. Sudan, as a country affected by this phenomenon, has established the National Office for Combating the Illicit Traffic on Small Arms and has enacted related national rules and regulations. This Office has participated in all regional conferences and workshops, including those held in Nairobi, Cairo, Oman, Addis Ababa and Algiers.

As national efforts are clearly insufficient, international assistance in accordance with the provisions of the Programme of Action is vital, particularly in the fields of technical assistance, stockpile management and cross-border activities. We are hopeful that the deliberations of this Committee during this session will, under your wise leadership, Mr. Chairman, greatly accelerate the attainment of our desired objectives.

Mrs. Swaraj (India): Mr. Chairman, first of all, I would like to express our happiness that you, a distinguished representative of a friendly country, have taken over as the Chair of the Committee on disarmament and international security, the First Committee of the General Assembly, which has been the incubator of several important global disarmament initiatives since its inception. I would also like to congratulate Ambassador Sergio Duarte on his appointment as the Secretary-General's High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

The very first resolution adopted by the General Assembly, resolution 1(I) of 1946, unanimously and unambiguously called for the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction and for the use of atomic energy only for peaceful purposes, a goal that has been repeatedly reaffirmed by the General Assembly. The very existence of nuclear weapons, and consequently the ever-present possibility of their use pose a threat to mankind. That is the central message of the first General Assembly resolution and the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly (resolution S-10/2).

The ban on biological and chemical weapons raised the hope that a similar prohibition could be imposed on the remaining weapons of mass destruction — nuclear weapons. However, nuclear weapons stockpiles, both strategic and non-strategic, are still too large and mostly at hair-trigger readiness. The threat of nuclear war remains real.

Our goal has to be the total elimination of nuclear weapons for a nuclear-weapon-free world. That was the core of the action plan presented by former Prime

Minister Rajiv Gandhi at the third special session of the General Assembly on disarmament in 1988. It provided a holistic framework for disarmament, with those with the biggest arsenals having greater responsibility for nuclear disarmament. Speaking before the General Assembly on 1 October, the Minister for External Affairs of India said:

> "India's long-standing commitment to universal, non-discriminatory and comprehensive nuclear disarmament is embodied in the vision of late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi for a nuclear-free and non-violent world. This vision was put forward nearly two decades ago. It remains undiminished today ... Indeed, it is all the more relevant today, given the fact that peaceful uses of nuclear energy can address the inexorably growing demand for new and non-polluting sources of energy to fuel economic development." (*A/62/PV.13, p. 23*)

The Minister for External Affairs also stated that we would be bringing proposals to Member States and this Organization in that regard.

Once the international community agrees on the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world, all States can work together to elaborate incremental and progressive steps for realizing that goal. Simultaneously, the international community could also craft a security system in which States do not feel the need to develop, produce, stockpile or use weapons of mass destruction. Both would require changes in attitudes, doctrines and national security postures to bring them more in line with today's globalized, interdependent world.

While maintaining a credible minimum nuclear deterrent, India remains committed to nuclear disarmament, which enjoys strong domestic consensus. India has remained steadfast to the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world, to be achieved through global, verifiable and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament. India's responsible nuclear doctrine is based on no-first-use and non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. We are prepared to turn those commitments into multilateral, legally binding obligations.

The doctrine also reaffirms India's readiness to join multilateral negotiations for the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons. India has continued to observe a moratorium on nuclear explosive tests. We are ready to participate in negotiations in the Conference on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, subject to its meeting India's national security interests. I would like to repeat this: We are ready to participate in negotiations in the Conference on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, subject to its meeting India's national security interests. We also believe that the Conference on Disarmament must find practical ways of addressing the issue of nuclear disarmament in a comprehensive and non-discriminatory manner.

Our commitment to nuclear disarmament is also reflected in the resolutions that we have been sponsoring in the First Committee and the General Assembly. We are convinced that a multilateral, universal and binding agreement prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances would contribute to the elimination of the nuclear threat and create a climate for negotiations towards an agreement on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. We therefore intend once more to submit the draft resolution that requests the Conference on Disarmament to begin negotiations on such a convention.

While the international consensus to ban nuclear weapons develops, we should take measures to mitigate the dangers posed by those weapons. We propose to submit again the draft resolution on reducing nuclear danger, which offers modest and practical proposals and calls for a review of nuclear doctrines, as well as for urgent steps to reduce the risks of unintentional and accidental use of nuclear weapons, including through the de-alerting and de-targeting of nuclear weapons.

Besides the threat to the safety and security of humankind from the likely use of nuclear weapons by States, there is now a new threat emanating from the possible use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists and non-State actors. We hope that the resolution on measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, which has been adopted by this Committee and the General Assembly by consensus since 2002, will receive a similar endorsement this year, with an even greater number of sponsorships. In that context, we welcome the entry

into force of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism on 7 July.

As a responsible nuclear Power, we stand for strengthening global non-proliferation, as proliferation has already affected our security interests adversely. A constructive dialogue needs to be evolved for stemming proliferation without unduly constraining peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

India remains constructively engaged in collateral disarmament processes, including on small arms and light weapons, the Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions, and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW). India has completed the destruction of 84 per cent of its chemical weapons stockpile and is committed to destroying its entire stockpile by April 2009. India was also among the first 23 States to ratify Protocol V of the CCW on explosive remnants of war, which entered into force last year. With this, India has become one of 25 countries to have signed and ratified CCW and all its five Protocols.

The First Committee and the General Assembly have a special role in forging a better understanding of the entire range of issues on the global disarmament agenda. Through such an exercise, they can promote purposive actions internationally and provide useful direction to the disarmament negotiating body, the Conference on Disarmament. The challenges and opportunities in the areas of disarmament, non-proliferation and international security require multilateral solutions. They also need a renewed commitment by States and a global compact to undertake collective obligations. India, on its part, is ready for such an exercise.

Mr. Bodini (San Marino): Please accept my congratulations, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee — congratulations that I want to extend to the new Bureau. I am sure that, under your guidance, this session will produce very positive results.

With a long history of peace and neutrality, and as one of the States of the Assembly that does not have an army, the Republic of San Marino is deeply concerned by the increasing number of local conflicts around the world and by the alarming arms race that is seriously threatening our global peace. For that reason, nowadays it is more important than ever to strengthen cooperation, transparency and trust among all States, together with the enforcement of international law.

Like many others, we believe that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the backbone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The Treaty plays a crucial role in the prevention of the diffusion of weapons of mass destruction, promoting cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and fostering the achievement of nuclear disarmament. In that regard, we welcome the positive results achieved in the preparation for the next NPT review conference.

The Republic of San Marino deeply appreciates the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The strengthening of the Agency's verification activities is of extreme importance for the proper functioning of the non-proliferation regime.

I also would like to stress the importance of the Chemical Weapons Convention, an important instrument that has been joined by so many nations.

This year, we also commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. I also take note of the Treaty's positive outcomes. In recent years, new areas have been cleared, stockpiles destroyed, and the living conditions of civilians substantially improved.

San Marino believes that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has achieved alarming dimensions. The great accumulation and use of those weapons represent a destabilizing factor in many areas of the world, causing every day the deaths of innumerable innocent people.

Despite all the progress made, our world is not a secure world at all. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Duarte, affirmed in his statement that "some 26,000 nuclear weapons reportedly continue to exist" (*A/C.1/62/PV.2*). That truth is of great concern to us. He confirms that the unthinkable number of nuclear weapons needs to be drastically reduced, but reduction alone is not enough. If we really want to build a world of peace and security for our future generations, each State that possesses nuclear arsenals should seriously consider eliminating

them completely, for our own safety and for its own safety as well.

With the passage of time, the chance of a nuclear accident, wanted or not, increases exponentially. One single event can wipe out the present, past and future of our people in San Marino. We have no alternative. All States — powerful and not, large and small, rich and poor — have to come together with strength, with vision, immediately and decisively.

Mr. Al-Hayen (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation is pleased to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee and to assure you of its full readiness to cooperate with you and with the staff of the Bureau, as well as with other delegations, in order to make your mission succeed. Furthermore, my country's delegation supports the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The State of Kuwait confirms its total commitment to the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation, in accordance with the requirements of the international community, out of its belief in collective work and in the important role of the United Nations. As the regrettable chain of failures in the field of disarmament continues — including, for example, the failure of the 2005 World Summit, the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and the 2006 United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects to reach an agreement — and while everyone understands the dangers of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, the arms race persists because of a lack of trust. Therefore, seeking to build such trust is one of the most important motives in achieving the goal of peace and security to which we all aspire.

My country's delegation hopes that all States party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will comply with their commitments and work closely with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to clarify any uncertainty or ambiguity surrounding their programmes through negotiations and constructive dialogue.

In that context, and while we welcome the recent agreement reached between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the IAEA as an important positive step towards dispelling fears and suspicions concerning the Iranian nuclear programme, we hope that transparent dialogue and cooperation will continue until all international issues and concerns are addressed. That, in turn, will help create conditions conducive to making the Middle East a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. We also welcome the peaceful solutions that emerged from the negotiations concerning the North Korean nuclear issue.

Here, we wish to stress the importance of putting pressure on Israel to join the NPT and to subject all its nuclear installations to the comprehensive safeguards of the IAEA. We confirm the right of all States to obtain the necessary skills and technology to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes within the context allowed by the relevant international conventions.

In that respect, we praise the advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice in July 1996 concerning the illegal use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons to resolve conflicts. We also support making effective international arrangements to give non-nuclear States assurances against the use of nuclear weapons or the threat of their use. We also renew our support for the conclusion of an internationally verifiable, multilateral and non-discriminatory treaty to ban the production of fissile material for the purpose of producing nuclear weapons or other means of nuclear detonations.

The State of Kuwait submitted to the General Assembly its national report, in which it clarified the measures taken to assure compliance with Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which seeks to prevent weapons of mass destruction and weapons materials from reaching terrorist groups. In that regard, in September 2005 the State of Kuwait signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

The comprehensive and non-selective implementation of the provisions of the NPT, particularly article VI regarding nuclear disarmament and article IV regarding the facilitation of peaceful applications of nuclear energy, is of vital importance. We also stress the importance of adhering to the principles contained in the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly; the outcome of the 1995 Review Conference of the States Party to

the NPT; and the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference, especially the items relating to the 13 practical steps that would have a positive impact towards making a success of the work of the Preparatory Committee, scheduled to convene in Geneva in 2008 in preparation for the 2010 NPT review conference.

The State of Kuwait confirms its support for the final communiqué of the fourth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which calls on States that have not ratified the Treaty to do so, particularly those whose ratification is required for the Treaty's entry into force. We also support its call on nuclear-weapon States to continue to adhere to a moratorium on nuclear tests or to suspend them until the Treaty enters into force.

With regard to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, Kuwait welcomed the General Assembly's adoption, in December 2005, of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. Despite the fact that the Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects did not achieve the desired results, it succeeded in highlighting a very important issue.

In conclusion, we hope that consultations in the First Committee will be transparent, comprehensive and focused on achieving a convergence of views in an effort to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of Member States in the area of international peace and security.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, first of all, to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to lead the First Committee. I also welcome the new Secretary-General's appointment of Mr. Sergio de Queiroz Duarte to head the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

I should like to endorse the position set out by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. It is our hope that our deliberations will provide new impetus to efforts to achieve the noble humanitarian objectives of the First Committee.

The entire world is aware of the dangers of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, and their proliferation. That danger is further compounded by the increased number of political crises that pose a threat to international peace.

Progress has been made this month towards a resolution of the nuclear issue of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. However, we would recall that delay is characteristic of efforts in the field of disarmament, whether with regard to weapons of mass destruction, be they nuclear, biological or chemical, or with regard to small arms and light weapons. In that connection, I would point to the failure relating to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) at the Review Conference on Disarmament and the failure at the Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In fact, the Secretary-General has rightly said that failure has become the rule rather than the exception when it comes to disarmament.

Although we reaffirm the right of States to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, provided that they strictly and transparently comply with the requirements of the NPT, we cannot but be fearful of the fallout from the Iranian nuclear issue, given that the region has been experiencing many conflicts and crises.

There is also tension between the United States and the Russian Federation. That reminds us of certain aspects of the cold war, to which no one wants to return.

One of the most critical developments in international relations occurred last year regarding the open secret of Israel's nuclear efforts, which have the support of certain States. On 5 December 2006, Robert Gates stated before the American Congress that Iran was surrounded by nuclear Powers: Pakistan to the east, the Russian Federation to the north and Israel to the west.

Just a week after that statement, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert himself dispelled any doubts on the subject while speaking to a German news network. He was reported to have said that Iran had ambitions to possess nuclear weapons so as to be on a par with the United States, France, Israel and the Russian Federation. That important development further unveiled the open secret that Israel undoubtedly

possesses nuclear weapons, and simultaneously underscored the urgent need to make the Middle East a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. That is the firm position of the League of Arab States. It is also a demand of the General Assembly, which has since 1980 been making such a call.

With regard to security issues in the Middle East, we appreciate the decision taken by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in September which calls for making the Middle East a zone free of nuclear weapons. We believe that the concept of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones is no longer a theoretical matter, as the increase in concluding treaties on such zones attests: the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the Latin America and the Caribbean; the Treaty of Rarotonga, for the Pacific; the Treaty of Bangkok, for Asia; the Treaty of Pelindaba, for Africa; and the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, for Central Asia. However, achieving that goal in the Middle East depends on an international political will capable of requiring Israel to respect the provisions of the NPT. We believe that establishing a link between nuclear disarmament and the political realities of the region would only intensify the arms race and lead to more crises.

In talking about weapons of mass destruction we do not want to detract from the dangers of small arms and light weapons and the destruction they cause. The fact is that we, in Lebanon, are the victims of destabilizing policies that advocate killing and destruction and the use of those lethal arms and weapons. Hundreds of thousands of cluster bombs were planted by Israel in southern Lebanon following the war it launched against our country in July 2006. Those bombs still kill innocent civilians, including children. Israel still refuses to provide the United Nations with maps as to the locations of those bombs.

In addition to Israel's occupation of Lebanese land and last year's aggression, terrorism has struck Lebanon in the form of the assassination of prominent political, journalistic and intellectual figures, and in the form of a gang called Fatah al Islam, which illegally obtained small arms and light weapons. If Lebanon's success against this gang is to continue and be protected and sustained, trafficking in small arms and light weapons must be brought under control, as must smuggling of such weapons across our borders.

In conclusion, I should like to return to the issue of weapons of mass destruction. Today, every measure put in place must be part of an overall effort and vision to prohibit such weapons so comprehensively and categorically that the only evidence of them will be found in museums, as Mohamed ElBaradei stated in his speech when he received the Nobel Peace Prize.

Mr. Ba-Omar (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am very pleased to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to preside over the First Committee at this session. We are confident that your wisdom and management skills will ensure the success of our work, and we are prepared to cooperate with you fully in order to achieve concrete results. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the other members of the Bureau, as well as to thank the former Norwegian Chairperson of the Committee. I also wish to congratulate Mr. Sergio de Queiroz Duarte on his assumption of the post of High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. We are certain that he will do excellent work in the area of international cooperation in order to halt proliferation and achieve disarmament.

Flexibility and political will are two crucial elements in achieving disarmament. In fact, they are two sides of the same coin that could help us to emerge from the deadlock and drift that has occurred in the international community in all areas of disarmament. All Member States must take very courageous positions. That is very important, especially at this stage in the history of the human race. We must leave behind the pessimistic atmosphere that has prevailed in the First Committee for so many years. We must strengthen the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and ensure the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We also have to ensure that the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva once again begins to function fully so that the current deadlock can be broken.

My Government supports all noble efforts aimed at eliminating all weapons of mass destruction, and my country has accordingly become a party to the relevant international treaties and conventions. We call on all States that have not yet acceded to the NPT to do so soon.

We would also like to reaffirm the right of all States to the use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes under the International Atomic Energy Agency's comprehensive safeguards system.

As has often been said, weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, should be eliminated. However, there has not been sufficient success in that regard. We believe the underlying reason to be the lack of transparency and seriousness and the double standards used by influential States.

Like other Arab States, we reiterate our call to make the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. It is our belief that that would establish a positive atmosphere conducive to ensuring cooperation among the States of the region. It would also help to end the arms race and strengthen peace and trust not only in the region but also in the world at large. The establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction certainly requires the attention and support of the international community.

Although we support the proposal to establish such a zone, we also wish to express our concern about the lack of security in the Middle East. Israel remains outside the NPT, and so we deem it necessary for Israel to join the NPT and place its installations under the comprehensive IAEA safeguards regime.

An agreement was reached in 1995 to make the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone. However, no progress has been made in that connection, and Israel is still outside the NPT.

With regard to the Iranian nuclear issue, my country supports the efforts made by friendly Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency to find a peaceful solution to the problem, a solution that would uphold Iran's right to the peaceful uses of nuclear technology and at the same time dispel fears and doubts expressed by the international community.

On the issue of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, we support recent developments in the effort to resolve that nuclear question. We hope that talks will continue among the parties involved in order that the matter may be resolved peacefully.

The Sultanate of Oman has sought to implement the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. My country is abiding faithfully by reporting procedures. We urge all States to implement the Programme of Action, in order to put an end to this serious problem that poses a threat to international peace and security.

We support multilateral disarmament efforts and the strengthening of the multilateral disarmament mechanisms. We must find an effective and transparent mechanism to build trust and to put in place confidence-building measures. That is the only real way to achieve complete disarmament.

We also welcome and support the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General in that regard, including the restructuring of the Department for Disarmament Affairs and his appointment of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. We believe that that restructuring will in fact lead to tangible results and allow us to build a solid foundation for disarmament, including nuclear disarmament.

I would like to conclude by reiterating our confidence that the work done in the First Committee will enable us to move towards the achievement of peace, security, stability and sustainable development and a strengthened role for the United Nations in all fields.

Mr. Kariyawasam (Sri Lanka): Let me first congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee and say how very pleased I am to see you again. My felicitations also go to the other members of the Bureau on their elections. I take this opportunity to assure you, Mr. Chairman, of my delegation's full support and cooperation in all your endeavours.

I should also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ambassador Sergio de Queiroz Duarte on his well-deserved appointment as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and to welcome him to the First Committee. Ambassador Duarte assumes that post with a wealth of experience and knowledge of the subject. I have no doubt that his guidance will add impetus to the work of the Committee and to the United Nations disarmament agenda as a whole at this difficult juncture. In that regard, I would like to thank him for his incisive introductory remarks at the opening of the meeting. I look forward to working with him in the time to come.

My delegation fully associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We still await the tangible peace dividend promised at the end of the cold war, and again at the onset of the twenty-first century. The road maps and

programmes of action established to achieve disarmament objectives at several major international conferences, such as special sessions on disarmament and the Millennium Summit, remain to be fully implemented. At this moment, it is evident that national and international security perceptions and paradigms are in a state of flux. However, the evolution of strategic perceptions that would advance new security paradigms as products of a unilateral approach to international peace and security issues can, in our view, undermine the existing sense of stability and security. New strategic visions, as well as threat perceptions, are best addressed in a multilateral or plurilateral context, or at least in a bilateral one. It has been proved beyond doubt that unilateralism cannot yield results.

It is in that context that the international community has recognized the need to review and rejuvenate the system of international security. However, the lack of international consensus on that issue has led to a gradual weakening of an existing sense of collective security based on multilateral agreements. The apparent apathy in convening the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament is a manifestation of that malaise. The more advanced weapons systems that militarily powerful States seem to pursue, with the expectation of bringing more security and peace to the world, could be a colossal waste of resources if there is no clarity or international understanding on a global system of security.

The Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2), which was adopted at the turn of this century by our heads of State, underlined the axiom of peace and security with less armament and more cooperation. The Declaration also reiterated the often-repeated desire of humankind for common security based on collective reliance, at both the national and international levels. The hope was held out that countries would pause in their desire for increased weaponization and would even roll back ongoing programmes. It was natural for us to expect that such lofty ideals would percolate down towards the various United Nations disarmament and security forums, such as the First Committee and the Conference on Disarmament, as well as to treaty review bodies. However, it is apparent that developments since the Millennium Summit have led us in the opposite direction.

International disarmament and arms control regimes have been challenged in many ways. Several treaty review mechanisms are becoming theatres for polemics. Treaties, and even action programmes, currently in force are contested or outmanoeuvred for being outdated on the basis of unproven theories and assessments, and for political expediency. The spirit and the purpose of widely adhered to treaties and action programmes are being violated because of a distinct lack of commitment for implementation measures by the parties and ill-motivated actions by those outside. The rules-based international conduct that must be observed under several treaty regimes is therefore being challenged. Those developments do not bode well for our efforts in the Committee and elsewhere to achieve international peace and security.

The Conference on Disarmament, which is touted as the sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, although active, has not been able to achieve its goals in the recent past. We stress the importance of the Conference agreeing on a practical and less ambitious programme of work that could direct the Conference towards the goals for which it was established.

It is distressing to realize that little progress has been made on the issue of nuclear non-proliferation, 40 years since the General Assembly's adoption of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Nuclear weapons remain the most dangerous weapon of mass destruction. Sri Lanka regrets having to observe that the integrity and relevance of the international non-proliferation system centred on the NPT is being undermined in many ways. The unwillingness of nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their obligations under article VI of the Treaty is widening the gap between the nuclear haves and have-nots.

Strengthening the existing nuclear non-proliferation regime by remedying its deficiencies is also an urgent need. Parallel efforts should be made to strengthen disarmament and non-proliferation regimes for other classes of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), in particular chemical and biological weapons. That is all the more important since the potential now exists for terrorist organizations to gain access to components of weapons of mass destruction. That ability of non-State actors to lay their hands not only on small arms and light weapons but also on weapons of mass destruction is a matter of grave concern.

Acts of terrorism by non-State actors continue to cause unprecedented havoc in many parts of the world. There is therefore a need to establish a new global compact on collective security that could encompass the issue of terrorism as well, for the benefit of both the States and peoples of the world. It is apparent that the security of a State does not per se necessarily translate into the security and well-being of a global citizen in our globalizing world. Only a legitimate rules-based system that is robust and internationally respected, similar to those now operating in several other fields of human endeavour, could have the capacity to combat terrorism effectively. We need to formulate, develop and agree upon such a broad-based system of security and conduct that will be respected by States, civil society and citizens of the world.

We therefore need to determine how this Committee can contribute to the efforts of the international community to develop a regime or system that encompasses all spheres of human activity and that would leave no room for anyone to perpetrate acts of terrorism targeting innocent civilians. For that purpose, the High Representative, his Office and this Committee could work with all branches of the United Nations system to contribute and make specific inputs, either directly or indirectly, to that objective.

Sri Lanka, together with Egypt, has for many years strived to draw the attention of the Committee to the issue of the prevention of an arms race in outer space. That is a manifestation of our often-repeated belief that the last frontier of humankind — outer space — should remain peaceful, as our common heritage, and that that is vital for stability and security on Earth. However, our efforts to achieve consensus and to work towards concrete action on that issue have yet to produce results. The threat of a rollback of the existing understandings on the issue also looms large. In that regard, Sri Lanka would also like to reiterate its call for the resumption of work at the Conference on Disarmament on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Today more lives are lost on a daily basis due to the illicit trade, easy availability and trafficking in small arms and light weapons, which is done primarily by non-State actors. In that respect, the full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is of paramount importance. The failure of the Programme of Action Review Conference to agree on further measures to fully implement and expand the scope of the Programmes of Action is a cause of concern for my delegation. Nevertheless, the forthcoming Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action will provide an opportunity to renew our commitment to the Programme and to seek ways to further strengthen its implementation. In that regard, Sri Lanka welcomes the successful completion of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on the brokering of small arms and light weapons and the valuable recommendations they presented to the General Assembly.

We expect the United Nations to play a major role in the implementation of the agreed measures and to take follow up action on the United Nations Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. At the same time, States and regional and international organizations, including the United Nations system, should continue to develop and support action-oriented research on that complex issue, with a view to bringing forth other relevant and interconnected issues pertaining to the illicit transfer, manufacture and proliferation of small arms and light weapons, especially those that involve non-State actors. Such efforts should focus on issues that have not been adequately addressed thus far either at the Conference that adopted the Programme of Action in 2001 or at the Review Conference in 2006.

The new leadership at the United Nations in New York, in particular on disarmament affairs, and in this Committee has a historic opportunity ahead. The time has come to innovatively assess how some of the moribund disarmament processes can be revived and how new issues facing the international community — such as the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and terrorism — can best be addressed. That challenge is real. Unless we are ambitious, we will fail the people of the world, who demand nothing less.

Mr. Goh (Singapore): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. My delegation looks forward to working with you. I would also like to welcome Ambassador Sergio de Queiroz Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. Finally, Singapore would like to associate itself with the statement delivered by Ambassador Marty Natalegawa of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and with the statement delivered by the representative

of Myanmar, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

All countries desire security. Together with sustainable development and respect for human rights, that is one of the fundamental pillars upon which the United Nations is built. The First Committee has been entrusted with an important duty — namely, to deliberate on and adopt resolutions pertaining to disarmament and international security.

As Ambassador Duarte eloquently stated, humankind as a whole continues to live in insecurity under the threat of nuclear weapons. We must recognize that no progress can be made if nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are regarded as competing priorities. In fact, nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are inextricably linked. Both disarmament and non-proliferation serve the interests of both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States.

Earlier this year, a smuggler was arrested in Georgia. He was carrying nuclear-bomb-grade uranium. I raise that example to highlight that the risk of nuclear terrorism is real. It is something we all need to work together to combat.

Like nuclear weapons, chemical and biological weapons also pose a serious danger. We must remain vigilant against those threats as the knowledge to produce such weapons becomes increasingly easy to obtain from the Internet.

That threat is particularly salient for a small country with an open economy like Singapore. Because we are so connected to the world through trade and transport links, we are particularly vulnerable to attacks. We are also vulnerable to shocks to the global economy. Singapore has therefore consistently supported multilateral non-proliferation instruments that serve the interests of international security and stability. That includes the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). In 2003, Singapore became the first operational Container Security Initiative port in Asia, and joined the Proliferation Security Initiative as a core participant. In 2005, we became the first port in Southeast Asia to take part in the Megaports Initiative.

In the Millennium Report of the Secretary General, then Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that small arms could be described as weapons of mass destruction because of the number of fatalities that they caused. Clearly, the illicit trade in conventional weapons is a scourge we must deal with. We continue to support the full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Disarmament and non-proliferation require a multilateral approach based on the rule of law. Treaties and conventions, especially those related to nuclear weapons, must make progress to remain credible. That progress cannot be achieved by conferences and committees alone; it also requires the concrete implementation of commitments, which, in addition, must be universal to be fully effective.

Disarmament and non-proliferation are challenges that can be overcome only if the nations of the world act together. In that connection, the United Nations has a central role to play, as no other body possesses the same international legitimacy. We should try to build on the common ground that exists. My delegation expresses our hope and confidence that, under your able leadership, Mr. Chairman, the Committee will be able to work purposefully to move ahead.

Mr. Khammanichanh (Lao People's Democratic Republic): On behalf of the delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, I wish to extend our warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. Our felicitations also go to the other members of the Bureau on their election. We assure you of our full cooperation and support.

My delegation would also like to extend a warm welcome to Ambassador Sergio de Queiroz Duarte on his appointment as the High Representative of the Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. My delegation looks forward to working with him and his dedicated staff.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic fully associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as the statement delivered by the representative of Myanmar on behalf of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

We are all now living in a world of accelerating but unmitigated global risks. The international security environment today is much more challenging. The continued existence of internal conflicts, violence, international terrorism and an arms race are the gravest threats to international peace and security. In the meantime, weapons of mass destruction (WMD) also pose a great danger to the very existence of humankind. In recent years, progress in the areas of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation has been slow and subjected to setbacks. Furthermore, nuclear weapons continue to be developed and stockpiled, and military doctrines are being revised that place a greater reliance on the potential use of such weapons.

In that regard, the Lao People's Democratic Republic wishes to underscore the need for Member States to live up to their commitments and obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The NPT remains, first, the cornerstone of global nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament and, secondly, the guarantee of the right of States to develop nuclear energy for peaceful uses. We strongly believe that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of such weapons. As long as those weapons continue to exist, there is a potential risk that they will fall into the wrong hands.

My delegation is heartened to see the increasing number of accessions to, and ratifications of, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We are pleased to note that the Fifth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which took place in Vienna, received positive support. It also provided a unique opportunity to underscore the importance of the Treaty and to accelerate its early entry into force. In that regard, we would like to renew our call for all Member States that have not signed or ratified the Treaty, in particular those States whose ratifications are needed for the Treaty's entry into force, to do so without delay.

While the progress made at last December's Sixth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention was modest, the successful launch, on 20 August 2007, of the Implementation Support Unit of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) was a positive step in the establishment of a new level of constructive cooperation between the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the States parties to the BWC that will help to strengthen the implementation of the Convention.

It is gratifying for us to witness the constructive and successful results achieved over the past 10 years in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, especially on the reduction of over one third of the declared global stockpile of chemical weapons. We believe that those positive steps are important landmarks on the road towards a world free of biological and chemical weapons, on the one hand, and where terrorists are prevented from acquiring such weapons, on the other.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is a platform to promote nuclear disarmament, prevent nuclear proliferation and enhance peace and security at the regional and global levels. In that spirit, the Lao People's Democratic Republic welcomes and supports the international efforts aimed at establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in all regions of the world.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone. However, the accession of nuclear-weapon States to the Protocol annexed to the Treaty is needed to make the Treaty come into full operation. In that spirit, the Lao People's Democratic Republic joins other ASEAN member States in welcoming the announcement by the People's Republic of China of its readiness to accede to the Protocol annexed to the Treaty. We encourage wide support for the ASEAN-sponsored draft resolution entitled "Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty)", to be submitted by Indonesia.

It is undeniable that the global challenges we face today imply not only a common vulnerability but also a shared responsibility to act and seek collective solutions — and indeed to share the inevitable costs of tackling those challenges. Let us all realize our common purpose to work together constructively in building effective and cooperative disarmament and non-proliferation regimes.

Mr. Khazaee (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, Sir, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the chairmanship of this important Committee. I am confident that, with your diplomatic skill and experience, the Committee will conclude its work with success. My congratulations also go to other members of the Bureau. I would also like to take this

opportunity to express my felicitations to Mr. Sergio de Queiroz Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, and to wish him success in accomplishing his immense responsibility to promote the cause of disarmament.

I wish to associate my delegation with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, as the only victim of the use of chemical weapons in recent history, is highly motivated to pursue the realization of the lofty goal of a world free of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Since the end of the war imposed on Iran by the regime of Saddam Hussein, tens of thousands of Iranians have continued to suffer and perish as a result of chemical weapons whose components came from certain countries permanently seated in the Security Council. I do not need to go far to find those victims. Almost a year ago, we lost one of our brightest colleagues in the Iranian Mission, Mr. Mahdi Vahidi, to cancer caused by those very chemical weapons. Mr. Vahidi was only 39 years old.

The international community should not accept that coming generations should continue to live under the horrifying shadow of the possible use of WMDs. We must ensure that the people of Iran remain the very last victims of the use of weapons of mass destruction of any type, at any time and under any circumstances. Iran has manifested its determination to that end by adhering to three major legal instruments — namely, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) — and by putting forward the idea of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

The existence of weapons of mass destruction, the development of new types of such weapons, and their horizontal proliferation continue to pose a real threat to regional and international peace and security. Today the international community is more than ever concerned by the continued existence of thousands of nuclear warheads in the stockpiles of a certain nuclear-weapon State. The United States, which boasts leadership in the fight against WMD, continues to stress the essential role of nuclear weapons as an effective tool for achieving security and foreign policy objectives. It also threatens to target non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Developing new nuclear weapon systems, constructing new facilities for the production of nuclear weapons and resuming efforts to develop and deploy tactical nuclear weapons, despite the commitment to effectively reduce them, are among the long list of instances of non-compliance by the United States with its obligations. The same country is planning to spend $50 billion on a missile shield in order to get so-called absolute security for itself, which would lead to the creation of a strategic and security gap within the overall global nuclear posture, with grave and long-term consequences for the whole world. But in an interdependent world, such a goal is neither achievable nor possible.

The principle of undiminished security for all is the key element in achieving and maintaining international peace and security. The traditional zero-sum approach to security, which ultimately prescribes the enhancement of one's security at the expense of others, should be abandoned. It must be replaced by cooperation and mutual respect.

In our view, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is an essential instrument to consolidate nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. For nearly three decades, it has been consistently emphasized by General Assembly and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) resolutions that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East would greatly enhance international peace and security. The Israeli regime continues to be the only impediment to realizing such a zone in the Middle East, due to its non-adherence to the NPT and its continued clandestine operation of unsafeguarded nuclear facilities. It is indeed ironic that that regime, which has rejected and violated every single resolution of the Security Council and the General Assembly, and which has flouted all international regimes on weapons of mass destruction, has received not only acquiescence but in fact material and financial support for its WMD programme from the United States.

Israel's concealment and unabated pursuance of nuclear arsenals during the past several decades have always been an open secret. However, the possession of nuclear weapons by the Israeli regime is no longer rhetorical or a rumour. The Israeli Prime Minister's acknowledgement of the unlawful possession of nuclear weapons by his regime, in an interview with a German television channel on 11 December 2006, revealed the real nature of that regime's clandestine

nuclear activities, which pose a serious and continuing threat to international and regional peace and security. The international community, especially countries in the region, must unite in curbing the threats posed by the weapons of mass destruction of that regime and in pursuing the establishment of a zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East at the earliest possible time.

The lack of progress towards the realization of nuclear disarmament and the failure of certain nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their obligations in that regard are frustrating. With the cold war now behind us, there is no longer any justification, if ever there were any, to continue to retain stockpiles of nuclear weapons, much less develop new ones. We strongly believe that preserving the credibility of nuclear disarmament obligations would contribute to strengthening cooperation in the area of non-proliferation.

Consistent with its long-standing policy, the Islamic Republic of Iran will present a draft resolution entitled "Follow-up to nuclear disarmament obligations agreed to at the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons".

We note that the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons held a successful first meeting in Vienna this year, and we reaffirm the significance of the NPT Review Conferences in providing a good opportunity to hold the nuclear-weapon States accountable with respect to fulfilling their nuclear disarmament commitments. Indeed, we are satisfied with the fact that compliance with all provisions of the NPT, including article VI, is now on the agenda of the review process. It will give us a good chance to follow up on the nuclear disarmament obligations agreed to in 1995 and 2000. We are confident that this draft resolution will be supported by the majority of Member States, as was the case last time.

Given the frustration of the decade-long impasse, the efforts made in the Conference on Disarmament to exit from it are understandable. However, we should not sacrifice the highest priority of the international community — nuclear disarmament — and we must strive to reach a balanced programme of work that will be responsive to the security of all. We hope that a balanced programme of work can create a new departure point for the elimination of nuclear weapons in a time-bound manner. Iran will maintain its position on the need for revitalization of nuclear disarmament negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament as well as within the context of the NPT.

As regards the Biological Weapons Convention, we note with satisfaction that the Sixth Review Conference, which took place last fall in Geneva, concluded its work with agreement on a follow-up mechanism aimed at promoting understanding among States parties. We once again underline the need for resumption of serious negotiations in order to strengthen the Convention through the establishment of an effective protocol.

Given the time constraints, Sir, let me shorten my statement.

Last but not least, I wish to elaborate on the latest development concerning the Iranian nuclear issue. As we have stressed time and again, Iran's nuclear programme is completely peaceful. All reports issued by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) since November 2003 have been indicative of the peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme, and the Agency has repeatedly reaffirmed that it has not seen indications of diversion of nuclear material to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

Despite this fact, the Security Council, in an unwarranted move orchestrated by a few of its permanent members, has taken unlawful, unnecessary and unjustifiable actions against the peaceful nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which presents no threat to international peace and security and therefore falls outside the Council's Charter-based mandate. Without a doubt, the move to bring the Iranian nuclear file to the Security Council and the intention of the co-sponsors of the resolution adopted, have been derived from their ulterior motives and narrow national considerations in order to deprive the Iranian people of their inalienable rights, rather than emanating from any so-called proliferation concerns.

Despite the politically motivated actions by a few countries, which led to the deadlock and interruption of negotiations, the Islamic Republic of Iran has, once again, taken a new initiative that has received wide support and appreciation. During the negotiations between the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council of Iran and the European Union (EU) High Representative, acting on behalf of the Five Plus

One group, Iran agreed to take a major step by negotiating with the Agency on the modality of dealing with the few outstanding issues. Pursuant to that agreement, in the course of a meeting with the IAEA Director General it was agreed that within 60 days the modalities of resolution of the outstanding issues would be discussed and concluded. As a result of intensive negotiations between two sides, the final text of the mutual understanding, reflected in the Agency's document INFCIRC/711, was concluded on 21 August 2007 in Tehran.

Bearing in mind past experience in dealing with such technical issues with the Agency, it was agreed that all issues should be taken up in a sequential and well-defined time frame, rather than dealing with them simultaneously and without prioritization. In a very short period of time, two of the major remaining issues — a plutonium experiment and the contamination at the Kara Facility — were resolved.

As the IAEA Director General evaluated and reported to the Board of Governors, the agreed modality is "a significant step forward". Therefore, it is essential to note that our initiative has created a positive new environment and has opened a window of opportunity for the return of Iran's nuclear dossier to the Agency's framework in full. In our view, the right path to the peaceful solution of the nuclear issue is through dialogue and technical elaboration within its proper and legal context, which is the framework of the IAEA.

Finally, the people and Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran are determined to exercise their inalienable right to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and to build on their own scientific advances in developing various peaceful aspects of this technology. Iran is committed to its obligations under the NPT and does not request anything more than to exercise its inalienable rights.

Mr. Nepal (Nepal): At the outset, Sir, let me congratulate you on your assumption of the chairmanship of this Committee. Other members of the Bureau also deserve our felicitations. My delegation would like to congratulate Mr. Sergio Duarte upon his appointment as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

It is a pity that we continue to be affected by the paradox of misplaced priorities. The world today spends huge amounts of money on armaments — over $1.2 trillion, whereas only a fraction of that would go a long way towards fighting poverty and correcting other imbalances in development in the developing countries, particularly in the least developed ones.

Every time we fail to make progress on disarmament, we miss an opportunity to divert the much-needed resources to development in the world's poorer countries. This delay in reaping the disarmament dividend is also fuelling conflicts and entrenching gaps in meeting resources for more important concerns at our doorsteps. This precarious situation persists because of very slow progress in multilateral disarmament negotiations over the last several years.

It is frightening to recall that the world today is perched atop a stockpile of an estimated 26,000 nuclear weapons. The danger of proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and their delivery systems is further aggravating already fragile international peace and security. The risk of those weapons falling into the hands of the terrorists is haunting humanity each passing moment.

As a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Nepal believes that the Treaty is the backbone of nuclear disarmament. The safest way of guaranteeing the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is the total elimination of nuclear weapons and complete assurance against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. As an interim measure, a universal and legally-binding instrument giving security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States could help build confidence in such total nuclear disarmament.

Nepal welcomes the recent breakthrough towards the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. We hope that the issue of Iran's nuclear programme will be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy.

In that context, we emphasize the need to further strengthen the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency to make the non-proliferation regime more effective, commensurate with the current challenges in that field. Although the modest progress witnessed in the first Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference and the Sixth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention provide some grounds for optimism, much remains to be done.

There is some new momentum this year in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. We hope that it will help to promote progress in the negotiations for the proposed fissile material cut-off treaty as a matter of priority. Likewise, we underscore the significance of universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in achieving the goals of nuclear disarmament.

We believe that the pristine nature of outer space as a common heritage of humankind should be preserved. We strongly oppose its militarization. It is unfortunate that some categories of newly emergent weapons technologies have undermined our common desire to prevent encroachment on outer space.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which has a very robust verification and non-proliferation regime. That reminds us that the international community can work in the same spirit in dealing with other weapons of mass destruction as well, including through measures to strengthen the biological weapons control regime.

The rampant proliferation and indiscriminate use of conventional weapons, especially small arms and light weapons, is causing untold human suffering and has affected millions of people in conflict zones all over the world. In that regard, we particularly stress the urgency of implementing the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is an effective way to promote confidence-building and transparency in armament, so it has to be further expanded in scope and strengthened in application.

Multilateral efforts alone can create a credible atmosphere for strong and effective action for disarmament. We should show the necessary will to hold the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament at the earliest possible date with a view to dealing with the entire gamut of international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation issues.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones are positive steps towards promoting nuclear disarmament. Therefore, we extend our support to such regional treaties and initiatives, including the nuclear-weapon-free status of Mongolia, as well as the recent establishment of the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone.

My delegation is of the view that regional cooperation in disarmament will immensely contribute to and complement efforts to promote disarmament, peace and security, and help promote confidence-building through regular and closer interaction among stakeholders. In that context, we are pleased to inform the Assembly that, following the signing of the Host Country Agreement and the memorandum of understanding between Nepal and the United Nations in July this year, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific will soon start its operations from its seat in Kathmandu, reinvigorating the Kathmandu process in regional disarmament. We would like to appeal to the international community for increased support for the effective functioning of the Centre.

In conclusion, the international community should allow no further delay in harmonizing its interests on matters of disarmament. Strong political will and genuine initiatives have become necessary to break the current impasse and move forward. Clearly, we need a renewed focus to revive genuine negotiations on disarmament issues. Nepal continues to believe that, through multilateral negotiations at the United Nations, the international community can move the agenda of disarmament forward. We strongly believe in the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament, and we strongly feel that the United Nations can play its true role in multilateral disarmament in achieving that cherished goal.

Mr. Wali (Nigeria): First and foremost, may I extend my warmest congratulations to you, Ambassador Paul Badji, on your election as Chairperson of the First Committee at this sixty-second session of the General Assembly. The Nigerian delegation equally felicitates Ambassador Sergio Duarte on his recent assumption of office as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

Through you, Sir, we also wish to convey our warmest congratulations to the other members of the Bureau. We are confident that you will certainly bring to bear your rich experience in the field of disarmament on the work of the Committee and steer its proceedings to a successful conclusion. The Nigerian delegation wishes to assure you of its unalloyed support and cooperation.

Nigeria associates itself with the statements made by the African Group as well as the Non-Aligned Movement.

We believe that the quest for world peace and security is one of the principal pillars on which the United Nations is based. We are equally of the opinion that the greatest threat to human civilization remains weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons. Those weapons are, unfortunately, still being developed, produced, tested, deployed, stockpiled and exploded. Nigeria believes that, in order to allay the nuclear threat and make this world a safer place for all, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and other relevant international instruments must be not only ratified, but also implemented with full commitment. They must be universally applied.

Strengthened by the meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference, held in Vienna earlier this year, we call for a special session on disarmament to be held as the way forward. Our delegation, therefore, will continue to give unflinching and unequivocal support to all multilateral efforts aimed at achieving disarmament in general and nuclear disarmament in particular.

Furthermore, as the Secretary-General said in his latest report on the work of the Organization (A/62/1), the failure and deadlock that have characterized major forums and instruments in the areas of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation for the past few years have underlined the clear need to revitalize the international disarmament agenda through coordinated efforts. It is in that respect that we wish to express our conviction that there is now an urgent need to convene a fourth special session devoted to disarmament.

As a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and a signatory to the NPT, Nigeria will continue to support article IV of the NPT, which guarantees the inalienable right of all States to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful and development purposes.

With regard to regional nuclear-weapon-free zones, Nigeria reaffirms its commitment to the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty — the Treaty of Pelindaba — and hereby appeals to all interested parties to take concrete steps to deliver on their own commitments to expedite the process of ratifying the Treaty.

Concerning the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, we lament the fact that such weapons, although categorized as small and light, represent massive killers of our people and that their toll in maiming the population is heavy. To the developing countries in general, such weapons pose serious problems for post-conflict peacebuilding efforts and stability. In the light of that, we associate ourselves with the call for the establishment of an effective international regime on brokering.

Finally, Nigeria wishes to draw attention to the fact that a sizeable proportion of the countries heavily affected by landmines are in Africa. These weapons, unexploded yet deadly, have maimed human beings and have rendered potentially arable lands unusable. We believe that the international community should assist further in educating and training experts in the prevention of mine-related accidents. Specifically, we are appealing for the establishment in West Africa of a training centre on landmines.

Mrs. Dibaco (Ethiopia): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. I would like to assure you of my delegation's readiness to extend its support to you in guiding the work of the Committee. Our heartfelt tribute goes also to other members of the Bureau for having assisted and facilitated the Committee's work. In addition, we congratulate Ambassador Sergio Duarte on his appointment by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

Ethiopia would like to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of members of the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as with the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the African Group.

Although my Government is concerned about the various disarmament issues submitted to the Committee for its consideration, I wish to focus on those issues that are most relevant to my country and its subregion.

First and foremost is the issue of landmines. It is very well understood that anti-personnel landmines are still being laid today in many parts of the world. Those mines, and mines from previous conflicts, continue to claim victims each day in every corner of the globe. Although the situation has improved in recent years,

there is still much to be done before we can live in a mine-free world.

As one of the countries with landmine problems, Ethiopia continues to remain focused on the seriousness of this matter. Because my Government attaches paramount importance to addressing the issue, we are making every possible effort to counter, in an effective and timely manner, the danger caused by landmines. To that end, the Ethiopian Mine Action Office was established in 2001 to deal effectively with the situation. In keeping with my Government's firm commitment to the global initiative in this sphere, Ethiopia also ratified the Ottawa Mine Ban Convention in 2004.

The Ethiopian Mine Action Office commenced its mine-clearance activities with two demining companies in 2002. Its clearance capacity now has grown to six companies. One community liaison officer is assigned to each of the demining companies, with the responsibility of liaising between deminers and mine-infested communities and disseminating mine-risk education to members of those communities.

Currently, on the basis of the Ethiopian Landmine Impact Survey, five technical survey teams are assessing the impacts of landmines in 900 communities in various parts of the country and are marking danger sites so as to warn local people of the presence of mines in specific areas. As of June 2007, an area totalling 33,830,071 square metres of land had been cleared of landmines in the highly mine-affected regions of the country, namely, the Tigray, Afar and Somali regions. More than 4,000 mines and nearly 40,000 items of unexploded ordnance were retrieved and demolished in the process of that exercise. As a result, an area estimated at 116.57 square kilometres has been released for development use by the local communities in those regions.

The Ethiopian Mine Action Office, in its continuing effort to raise awareness among the local population about ways to reduce mine-related accidents and risks, has provided mine-risk education to nearly 300,000 people, thus enabling community members themselves to report any suspicious object to community liaison officers or deminers. Consequently, 364 anti-personnel mines, 80 anti-tank mines and 36,460 items of unexploded ordnance have been reported by community members for eventual destruction by explosive-ordnance disposal experts.

Those positive efforts have had a significant impact in the struggle to overcome the problems related to landmines in Ethiopia. However, it is well understood that the efforts of my Government may not achieve the expected outcome in time unless they are accompanied by strong financial and technical backing from the international community. Moreover, it is the firm belief of my Government that the Mine Ban Treaty could be fully implemented with continued and stronger commitment by all concerned parties to create a mine-free world, as envisaged by us all. We also believe that a stronger mechanism should be put in place to buttress the landmine victim assistance programme, whose full implementation would undoubtedly enable the Mine Ban Treaty to achieve complete success.

The second area of my country's concern relates to the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. As we have stated in the past before this body, Ethiopia is committed to the effective implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Accordingly, my country is also duly committed to the Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, at the level of the African region, and to the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa, at the subregional level.

In addition to the creation of an environment conducive to regional cooperation in this field, there is an ongoing process to revise existing national legal frameworks, rules and regulations in order to bring the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons under stricter control.

Moreover, based on existing policy and legislation, my Government has made a significant effort, collecting around 11,000 illegal small arms and light weapons, of which about 1,700 have already been destroyed. In general, in order to find a sustainable solution to the problem related to small arms and light weapons, the international community should support national as well as regional efforts.

Ethiopia vehemently supports the new process launched last year by the General Assembly to pave the

way for a global arms trade treaty in the belief that that would prove to be an important step towards the control of the import, export and transfer of conventional weapons. Out of this conviction, therefore, Ethiopia was a sponsor of last year's resolution 61/89, the first of its kind. We will continue to extend our unreserved support and cooperation for the successful conclusion of this important treaty.

In conclusion, let me reassert Ethiopia's hope that this session of the First Committee will play its due role in strengthening the international peace and security regime. To that end, my delegation remains committed to working together with other delegations in order to achieve our common goals.

The Chairman (*spoke in French*): We still have a few delegations on our list, but the speakers are not present here in the room. Accordingly, I suggest that we move on to statements in exercise of the right of reply that had been requested yesterday at the end of our afternoon meeting.

Before calling on those delegations which have asked to exercise their right of reply, may I remind members that, under the rules of procedure, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second. I would invite speakers speaking in exercise of the right of reply to comply with those time limits.

Mr. Robatjazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Yesterday, the First Committee heard a number of absurd and unsubstantiated allegations about my country from the representative of the Zionist regime, a regime that has based its policies, practices and behaviour on aggression, occupation, State terrorism, violence and bloodshed.

There is no value in responding to the blatant remarks of that regime, and my delegation categorically rejects them.

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. Chairman, before exercising my right of reply in connection with the statement made yesterday by the delegation of Georgia, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that under the rules of procedure, which you have just invited us to respect, statements made in exercise of the right of reply should be delivered, as a general rule, on the day on which the statement being replied to was made. This relates to rule 73 of the rules of procedure; and is set out in paragraph 78 of annex IV to the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. Otherwise, the point of the right of reply is simply lost.

Coming back to what I wish to say, I would like to draw attention to the fact that yesterday, at the 6th meeting, the delegation of Georgia spoke about the situation in the area of the Abkhaz conflict. We do not fully understand the point of discussing this issue within the context of the First Committee, particularly since last week the Security Council considered the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the area of the Georgia-Abkhaz conflict; yesterday the Security Council adopted resolution 1781 (2007) on that subject.

However, I feel I have to comment on one of the statements made yesterday. I refer to the incident that occurred on 20 September, when Georgian special forces attacked a group of people from the Counter-Terrorist Centre. People died as a result of the attack, including two military personnel who were shot at very close range. They were just shot straight into the body from very close by. I think that any discussion of security issues reaches another level when people actually die in the course of such events.

I fully agree with what the representative of Georgia said about the need for security in that region. Russia is part of the peacekeeping operation there, and has been for 13 years. During that period, some 100 peacekeepers have died. It seems to me that there is a straightforward way to create security: to respect agreements that have been signed regarding a ceasefire and separation of forces. I refer to the 1994 Moscow Agreement. If that Agreement were respected, then I trust there would be no further violations.

The Chairman (*spoke in French*): I would remind the representative of the Russian Federation, who reminded the Chair of the need to apply the rules of procedure, that rule 73, relating to the right of reply, references paragraph 8 of decision 34/401, which reads as follows:

> "Delegations should exercise their right of reply at the end of the day whenever two meetings have been scheduled for that day and whenever such meetings are devoted to the consideration of the same item."

As far as I know, yesterday we had only one meeting, and I would say that at the end of that meeting we had exactly 9 minutes left. I could not offer those 9 minutes to the delegation of the Russian Federation to exercise its right of reply when there were other delegations that also wanted to exercise their right of reply.

I apologize for having had to apply the rules of procedure so strictly, but I could not favour one delegation over another.

Mr. Darwish (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Although the Israeli delegate was speaking out of context yesterday, I refrained from taking up a point of order to interrupt her and exercise my right of reply to counter her allegations. Everybody knows that the principle of the policies of this occupying entity is based on lies, flimsy pretexts, falsifications and accusations. That is not really useful, because the entire world is aware of the essence of that entity and its colonialist, aggressive practices that characterize it as State terrorism par excellence.

That entity has no right to accuse other countries of being rogues because it has indisputably proven that it itself is the biggest rogue State. It has never implemented a single one of the one thousand resolutions adopted against it by this Organization. Quite clearly, that entity has disavowed the maternity or paternity of the Organization from which it was born, in a way, by Caesarean section. The actions levelled against my country by that occupying entity have been motivated by political motives, not by motives of security, with the aim of distracting attention from its blunt intervention in the internal affairs of Lebanon and the impeding of any Lebanese national initiative.

I would like to recall statements made by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and the commander in chief of Lebanon's army. They denied that they conveyed any information about the army to the Government on this matter. The Lebanese Minister for Defence also categorically denied that anything, even a mosquito, had crossed the border. The report issued by the independent group that is monitoring the Lebanese border confirmed the accuracy of this position in paragraphs 45 and 120. My country had already informed the Secretary-General of this position in document S/2007/431.

We would also like to confirm that high-level contacts between the Lebanese and Syrian authorities have been ongoing, to ensure that their borders are respected and under control. We have also submitted a detailed list to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council about the number of meetings we have held, and we shall continue to report to the Secretariat about any further meetings we may have.

I would also like to reiterate that my country has doubled the number of border guards on the Syrian side and that we have intercepted weapons smuggled from Lebanon into Syria and weapons smuggled from Iraq to Lebanon via Syria. We have sent two identical letters further to my memorandum No. 169, dated 4 May 2007, to both the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council on that matter. Syria had asked a number of European countries to provide it with technical equipment to help it control its borders, but we have not received any positive response from those countries.

Let me stress again that the accusations by Israel are totally false and unjustified. Israel is an enemy entity and is occupying Syrian territory, and the claims put forward by Israel that it possesses evidence are blatant proof of its violation of resolution 1701 (2006), since it is an implicit acknowledgement of Israel's invasion of Lebanon's airspace. The evidence was merely photographs of vehicles transporting fruit and vegetables, not vehicles carrying weapons, as Israel claimed. In fact, Israel had bombed one of those trucks carrying vegetables, killing 30 Syrian civilians.

It is a country that has build eight military nuclear reactors in a rather small territory of 22,000 square kilometres and built a nuclear shelter for its leaders to protect them from a possible nuclear war, an entity that claims arrogantly and insolently that it has nuclear weapons, hundreds of nuclear warheads, an entity that has dropped millions of cluster bombs in Lebanon and has not even provided geographic maps to show where they were dropped. It is an entity that disposes of nuclear waste in occupied territory, an entity that claims that Gaza is enemy territory while it itself is an occupying country that builds illegal settlements and a separation wall, an entity that is trying to change the character of the occupied Golan Heights, an entity that is the fourth largest exporter of weapons of death, an entity that penetrates the airspace of a sovereign country, carrying out an aggressive military action such as happened on 6 September 2007

against my country. An entity of such descriptions should not be allowed to boast of its constant lying. It should be ashamed of repeating such scandalous and boring statements. Perhaps they will learn someday.

Whenever we exercise our right of reply, whenever we speak before an international body, we shall expose this occupying aggressor entity, and we shall try to shed light on what its practices that violate the United Nations Charter and all humanitarian, religious and international laws and norms.

Mr. Shamaa (Egypt): The delegation of Egypt rejects the false allegation, made by the Israeli Minister for Public Security two days ago and repeated yesterday by the delegation of Israel, that Egypt is transferring arms across the Sinai Peninsula to the Gaza Strip or facilitating such transfer. Egypt is fully committed to the letter and the spirit of the peace treaty with Israel and is taking every measure possible to prevent any smuggling activity across its borders in either direction. That is of the utmost importance to Egypt's national security and to the security of the region as a whole.

It is regrettable that, while negotiations are ongoing between Egypt and Israel on increasing the number of Egyptian security forces along the border to prevent smuggling activities, such false allegations are being made by the Minister and by the representative of Israel to the First Committee. It would have been wise for the Israeli delegation to concentrate instead on the press statements by its leadership affirming its possession of weapons of mass destruction, in violation of international law and against all international attempts to achieve universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

We look forward to a thorough discussion of this matter.

Mr. Tsiskarashvili (Georgia): In response to the statement made by the representative of the Russian Federation, I would like to make clear that this issue, which we raised yesterday, has crucial importance in the context of broader regional and international stability. Therefore, we believe that this is the body in which such issues must be addressed. Let me make a few additional comments concerning our views with regard to the incident that took place on 20 September.

The report by the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) confirms that a shoot-out took place on Georgian territory. It absolutely does not matter on which side of the administrative border the incident happened; either way, it took place on the territory of a sovereign United Nations Member State. The report also confirms that the group was trained under the leadership of two Russian officers.

In addition, UNOMIG's progress report clearly suggests that the Mission is not in a position to ascertain the exact circumstances of the death of the two Russian officers; the investigation into the matter will continue. In that regard, I would like to raise the main important question now facing us: what were those two armed Russian officers doing in the forests of a neighbouring country?

I would also like to comment on some of the remarks made by my colleague from the Russian Federation. We deeply regret that the Russian side believes that that sabotage group was an anti-terrorist unit. In reality, it was a sabotage group of the secessionist regime.

The Chairman (*spoke in French*): There are no further speakers on my list for this meeting. We shall meet again this afternoon at 3 o'clock, when, I hope, we shall complete the list of speakers for the general debate. If we do so by early afternoon, we will have enough time to begin the second phase of our work, the thematic discussion. Together with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, we will consider the issue of follow-up of resolutions and decisions adopted by the Committee at its past session. As mentioned yesterday, that will take place in an informal format.

In addition, I know that a number of delegations submitted their draft resolutions within the agreed time frames. I should like to encourage the other delegations to ensure that they truly respect the time frames that we established. While wishing to show flexibility for those delegations that cannot adhere to the time frames, I encourage them to make every possible effort to do so.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.